THE ICONOGRAPHY OF DUALISM

Pre-Columbian Instruments and Sounds as Offerings?

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When approaching the airport of Guayaqil, my fantasy sometimes deceives me. Tired and jet-lagged, I imagine countryside houses and villages to be like those west of the two big Rios Daule and Guayas—which provided fertility to the region still 30 years ago—to be present close to the border of the capital of trade and money. But on the east bank, the formerly green marshland has been replaced by the cement desert of a the huge centre of modern communication—the airport.

Just before the authorities started their plans for the international airport "Febres Cordero" by draining the area, Ecuadorian archaeologists quickly unearthed pre-Columbian settlements near the swampy fields (Parducci 1970). They excavated many ceramics, mostly shards, and amidst them countless well-preserved small artifacts, including a considerable amount of vessel flutes and variously shaped whistles. Thus they accidentally gained certainty about the fact that musical instruments were part of the inventory used by the settlers. Further, in later archaeological excavations whistles were stated to be part of the garbage of settlements, though they were found less often in tombs, and only very specially designed ones were discovered at offering places. I will come back to this point.

In the history of Andean archaeology it has rarely occurred that the context of the findings was so reported, that is entered into the records and published. Besides, musical instruments were—and are—not always identified as sounding objects. These facts complicate the work of the music archaeologist, who aims at reconstructing not only the shapes and sounds but also, if possible, the former functions and meanings of the instruments. Early societies of the Andean region do not provide any direct messages about these complex problems—what is natural, since they were illiterate. Written tradition began only with the Conquista.

Above any other type of information, iconography appeals first to the researcher. The design of the mere shape appears to be as important as that of the painted or modelled decoration in helping to understand symbolism or even metaphors, if this is at all possible.

Examining the Andean heritage of musical remains, some spectacular objects attract our attention, especially when reflecting on the topic of this conference. First of all we can consider a double-headed trumpet (Figure 1) of the Moche (200 B.C.–700 A.D.), a two-faced rattle with an animal at one end

and a human head at the other, also Moche (Figure 2[1]) (both of these instruments of clay), and a double-sided rattle of wood (Figure 3), probably of the Chimu (1100–1400 A.D.) or early colonial. Our synaesthetically functioning mind is spontaneously captivated by imagining a very special sound effect, for instance of the trumpet, but its sound resembles that of the one-headed animal trumpets of the Moche. The three objects are unparalleled, so no basic interpretation is possible. What remains are speculations: the instruments might recall mythological ideas of religious dualism as current in pre-Columbian regions, and their double shapes would suggest this. Religious dualism was already shown to be exemplified by the wooden rattle 25 years ago (Zuidema 1967), and the trumpet and the man-animal rattle might have a similar meaning that we can vaguely approach, but not more. This has also to be accepted for Ecuadorian statuettes of musicians. Fabricated in moulds, some of them appear quite often. They are richly dressed and decorated, and they hold a big panflute in front of their body that reaches from their mouth or chin down to their feet (Figure 4, Jama-Coaque, 500 B.C.–500 A.D.). Symmetrically shaped, with the longest tubes at the two ends, they are obviously not meant to be played at all. The enormous pieces of jewellery fixed to the musicians' faces would prevent sound production. Other musicians are holding or playing two instruments at the same time, some combinations being traditional for the Andean regions up to recent ages, such as panpipes and drums or rattles, or a rattle and a tortoise shell. Do these combinations perhaps have a meaning that goes beyond the sound? Were they designed also referring to mystical dualism (Figure 5)? These remain, for today, unanswered questions, as the various interpretations form a puzzle that cannot yet be solved. I will confine my paper to two subgroups of sounding objects, namely to rattles and whistles.

Rattles are, as we know, American Indian instruments par excellence. Double-headed sound boxes, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic, mostly owls or felines, were quite common among the Moche and Chimu. Many rattles were formed like drug containers (Figure 6) and are often involved with them in literature. Rattling mostly accompanied rituals in which drugs or sniffing played a significant role, such as in shamanism, and the ancient Peruvians stressed this important relationship by designing their rattles in this way.

No clay rattle of the types mentioned are to be found in the files of archaeologists. Our interpretation derives from nothing but the iconography of the pieces. The deep significance, though, of rattles in ancient Peru and Ecuador has been revealed by tombs of so-called "kazikes" or "shamans"[2], which contained metallic rattles and rattling devices as headdresses or jewellery personally attributed to the "Lords", thus seeming to have nothing to do with mythology or religious rituals—if their owners were not the representatives of the deities on earth. The characteristic of gift-offering is obviously related to

this material; they were made to be broken after use in ritual contexts of the religious practice.

In the large class of whistles there is one group that also permits this interpretation. Before dealing with them, I must consider the larger range of instruments.

Whistles were significant instruments of all pre-Columbian cultures. In Ecuador they are even "leading fossils" for the classification of objects in general, and thus also for a relative chronology.

Four-, three- and double-headed whistles are to be related to early cultures such as Chorrera (1200–500 B.C.) and to the earliest phases of internal cultural dynamics, as in Pre- or Chorrera-Bahia (Figure 7). A double mouthpiece and two wind channels are to be observed in early periods. Later cultures and horizons seem to prefer small instruments, precise and very high in pitch, in form imitating human and animal figures, birds, fish, opossums, frogs and the like in Manteño (Figure 8, 500–1400 A.D.), dogs and snails in Ica-Chincha (1100–1400 A.D.) or Chimu.

Whistles have been found in the vicinity of private places, as explained earlier, just like vessel flutes. But there are exceptions which involve, for instance, the most spectacular whistle types, such as the Moche instruments consisting of a relatively large anthropomorphic relief showing a warrior, a priest or a musician with a conical tube fixed horizontally to the flat back of the relief (Figure 9). The sound is developed in one or two globular applications below or beside the tube. These objects are reported to have been deposited at offering plateaux near the *templo de la luna* or the *templo del sol* of the Moche area, together with clay trumpets with animal heads or with figures of warriors, prisoners, priests or musicians, all or most of them broken (Figure 10). The procedure of breaking musical instruments before they were dedicated to the gods or deposited as offerings is well known from many other ancient cultures.[3] This might prove that the sound simply had to be loud, rough and penetrating, which is indeed the fact for the Moche whistles and trumpets. The mere musical possibilities, such as the capability of producing a certain number of notes or a wide range of different sounds were obviously not important.

The iconographical evidence of Ecuadorian rattles and whistles is less clear and distinct in terms of a possible former function. But a large group of artifacts common in all coastal Peruvian and Ecuadorian cultures show a kind of correspondence in iconography with a differing imagination of sound. The objects concerned are anthropological, mostly female figurines of clay, about 15–30 cm high. Peruvian devices of this kind have pebbles inside. They were fabricated by the Nazca people (200 B.C.–700 A.D.), as well as by the Moche and Chimu. They appeared as the result of real mass production in the middle coastal region and spread there widely up to the Chankay Empire (Figure 11, 1100–1400 A.D.). Ecuadorian figurines have attachments so that they can function as single or double whistles or as vessel flutes (Figure 12). All coast-

al cultures of the so-called Regional Development horizon (500 B.C.–500 A.D.) possessed them. A comprehensive typology (Hickmann 1987/1991) reveals their many sizes, forms, shapes, decorations and sounds and, above all, their variations in organology. Anthropomorphic figures were common also in the earliest times of Ecuadorian prehistory, such as Valdivia (ca. 2700–1700 B.C.), where they appeared in mass, and also later, just before the Conquista, as in Manteño, but at neither time with whistling devices. Many were hollow, others solid. All pre-Columbian cultures of Ecuador provided figurines with or without a sound function at obvious places of worship, up to now traditionally called "offering places". Many of them were broken, a large amount very well preserved and still sounding. Private environs and places of danger contained these objects. Less is known about the contexts of Peruvian rattling figurines.

The human shapes, often showing women with babies, indicate most probably devices of fertility cults, the sounds being symbols of life. They were not musical instruments in their primary meaning. Compared to the sounds of vessel flutes and even whistles, the voices of the figurines are poor, thin, not very flexible and sometimes shrill, and thus were obviously not designed to play a part in the everyday music of the societies nor to fit in the frame of the soundscape that characterised the regions of pre-Columbian peoples.

We know that unusual sounds were created for extraordinary occasions, not only in the Americas. This might have been the case also for these puzzling figurines, which were pieces of devotion as much as toys and whistling instruments—or all at the same time.

The soundscape of everyday life was quite different—as jingling, rattling and whistling attachments adorned most of objects, a soft noise was created

Fig. 1. Double-headed trumpet. Peru, Moche (300 B.C.–700 A.D.), 1 = 27 cm. Birmingham, Museum and Art Gallery—Credit: Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham.

that must never have stopped as long as the persons handling them kept moving. Vessel flutes and panpipes, with their gentle continuous sounds, fitted in perfectly. The voices of the offerings were different, as we have seen—penetrating, too dark or too light to be recognised as part of the usual environmental acoustics. They were apparently meant to be special and to cause fear and create a sense of distance from the holy action.

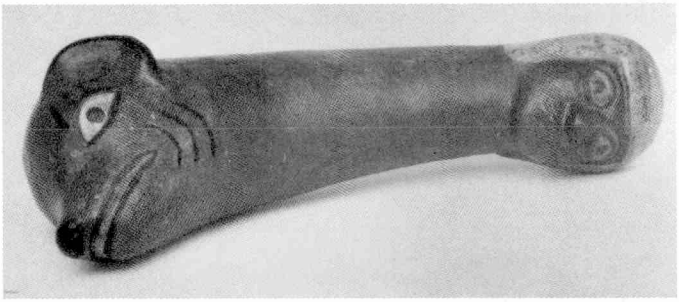

Fig. 2. Two-faced rattle, man and animal. Peru, Lambayeque-Chimu (1100–1400 A.D., 1 = 18,10 cm. Edinburgh, Royal Scottish Museum—Credit: Royal Scottish Museum.

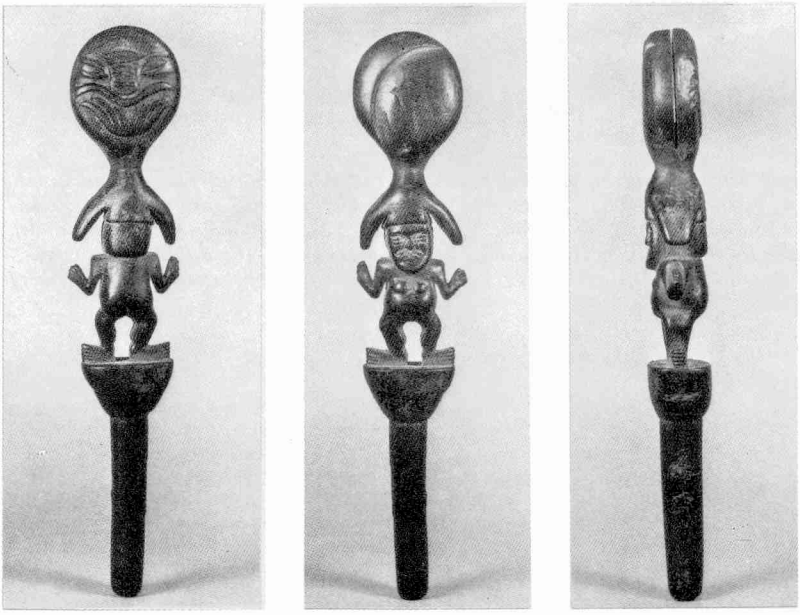

Fig. 3 a–c. Double-sided rattle (Sun and Moon). Peru, Chimu (1100–1400 A.D.) or early colonial period, h = 17 cm. Leiden, Museum voor Volkenkunde—Credit: Museum voor Volkenkunde, Leiden.

Fig. 4. Musician with big panflute. Ecuador, Jama-Coaque (500 B.C.– 500 A.D.), h = 28 cm. Guayaquil, Museo Antropológico—Credit: Ellen Hickmann

Fig. 5. Musician with panflute and rattle. Ecuador, Jama-Coaque (500 B.C.–500 A.D.), h = 23 cm. Quito, Museo arqueológico del Banco Central—Credit: Ellen Hickmann; drawing from photograph: Boris Eisenberg.

Fig. 6. Rattle, shaped like a drug container. Peru, Chimu (1100–1400 A.D.), l = 13 cm. London, Museum of Mankind—Credit: Ellen Hickmann.

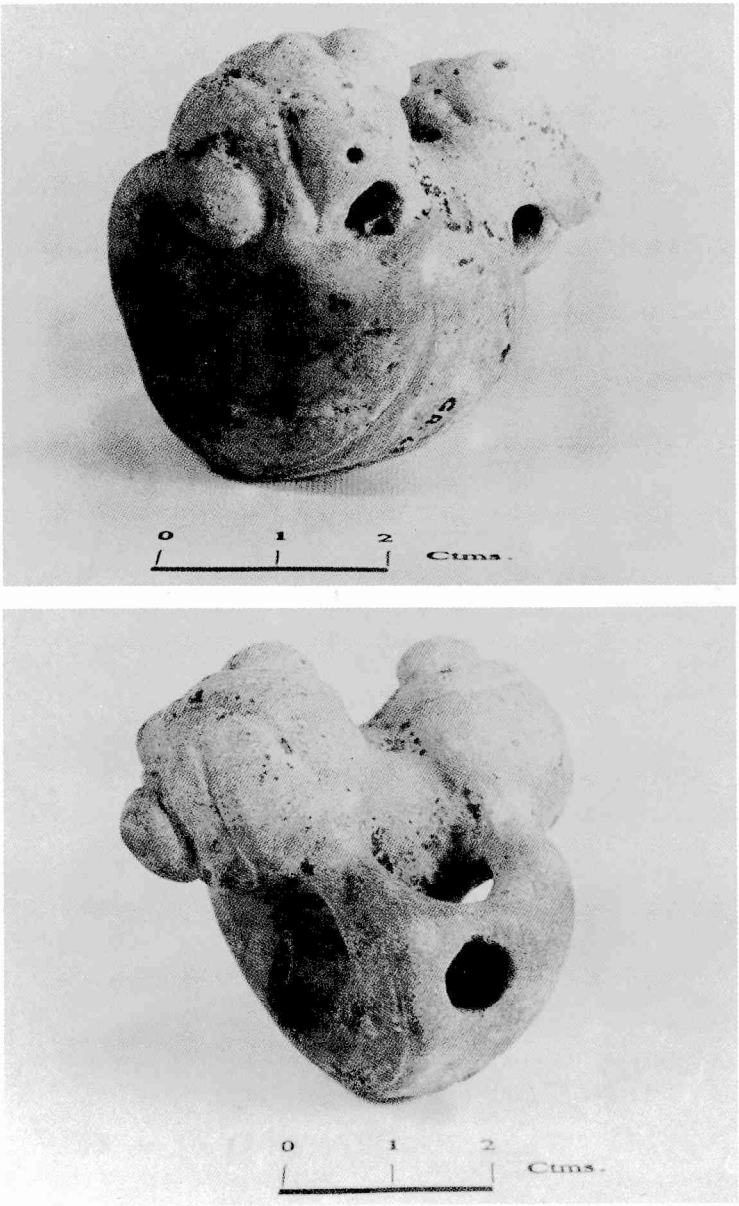

Fig. 7 a, b. Double-headed whistle. Ecuador, Chorrera (1200 B.C.–500 A.D.), h = 4.2 cm. Guayaquil, Museo Antropológico—Credit: Jorge Massucco, Guayaquil.

Fig. 9 a–d. Four anthropomorphic whistles in shape of warriors (front and back), with one or two sound generators at the back. Peru, Moche (300 B.C.–700 A.D.), h = 8-11 cm. Hamburg, Museum für Völkerkunde—Credit: Museum für Völkerkunde, Hamburg.

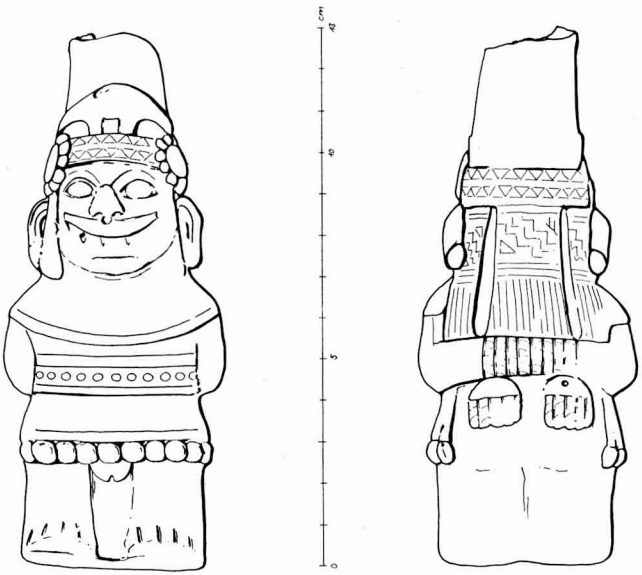

Fig. 10 a, b. Trumpet (front and back) in the shape of a prisoner with tube broken off. Moche (300 B.C.–700 A.D.), h = 130 cm. London, Museum of Mankind—Credit: Ellen Hickmann; drawings from photographs: Boris Eisenberg.

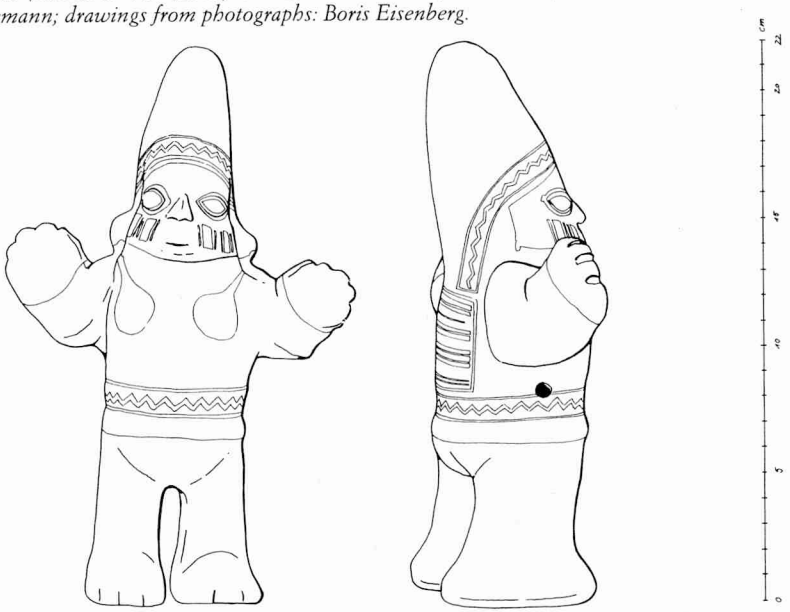

Fig. 11 a, b. Rattling figurine with gesture of adoration. Peru, Chancay (1100–1400 A.D.), h = 22 cm. Bonn, Sammlung des Instituts für Völkerkunde der Universität—Credit: Ellen Hickmann; drawings from photographs: Boris Eisenberg.

Fig. 12 a–e. Anthropomorphic figurines (front and back [d, b, e]) with two whistles each. Ecuador, Bahia (500 B.C.–500 A.D.), h = 11–15 cm. Guayaquil, Museo Antropológico— Credit: Jorge Massucco, Guayaquil.

Notes

1 The head-ended part of this piece might originally have been a handle, as was typical for certain types of Moche vessels; the animal head of the opposite side looks like it was attached to it much later, after the handle had broken off. This interpretation was offered during the discussion following my paper by Annemarie Hocquenghem.

2 Rich graves were found in North Peru and excavated by W. Alva in the late 1980s (Alva 1988), and similarly comprehensive tombs were unearthed in central Ecuador by Estrada about 1950 (Estrada 1957) and Fresco about 1970/1980 (Fresco 1984). For a descriptive summary of the burial sites and their metallic finds see E. Hickmann (1990:347–69).

3 E. Hickmann 1944; see especially the discussion on the ritual breaking of musical instruments, p. 328.

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